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Iran Said to Order U.S. Reporter's Ouster

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 — Iran said today that it had ordered the expulsion of an American journalist detained four days ago and subsequently charged with espionage.

American and Swiss diplomats said they could not confirm the report about Gerald F. Seib of The Wall Street Journal. Officials of the newspaper said they had been told by the Iranians that Mr. Seib was being expelled.

Iran's official press agency, quoting an unnamed Information Ministry official, said Mr. Seib's expulsion was ordered after a judicial investigation. The official added that Mr. Seib was permanently banned from Iran, but gave no details of his departure.

A later news agency report quoted an unnamed source as saying that Mr. Seib would leave Iran on Thursday.

Released in Swiss Custody

At a news conference at the United Nations, Iran's permanent representative, Said Rajaei-Khorassani, said Mr. Seib had been released into the custody of the Swiss, who are responsible for American interests in Iran.

"To the best of our information, he has been released, handed over to the Swiss Embassy in Teheran, and he will be expelled, or is already probably expelled from Iran," said Mr. Rajaei-Khorassani.

The Swiss Foreign Ministry in Bern has not confirmed Mr. Seib's whereabouts or whether he is in their custody. Diplomatic sources said the Swiss would make no comment until Mr. Seib has safely left the country.

The State Department spokesman, Charles E. Redman, said he could not confirm the Iranian reports about Mr. Seib's expulsion.

Moving 'in Right Direction'

Wall Street Journal executives said that while they had been told that Mr. Seib was being expelled, they could not confirm that he had been handed over to the Swiss. "Things seem to be proceeding in the right direction, but we haven't had the kind of confirmation we really need and haven't spoken to Gerald directly," said a Journal spokesman, Lawrence A. Armour.

The Reagan Administration has stated that Mr. Seib is not a spy and has quietly protested Mr. Seib's detention through the Swiss governments friendly to both the United States and Iran and other contacts.

The first indication that Mr. Seib would be released from detention came early today in a Teheran Radio interview in which Iran's Prime Minister, Mir Hussein Moussavi, said he would be expelled in two or three days.

Mr. Seib "was engaged in certain investigations and collecting intelligence at the front," said Mr. Moussavi, who has opposed the warming of relations with America. "After being questioned, the issue has been clarified and I think he will be expelled from the country during the next two or three days."

Accused of Being 'Zionist Spy'

Mr. Seib, one of 50 journalists visiting Iran at the invitation of the Government, was accused of being a "spy of the Zionist regime who had come to Teheran disguised as a reporter."

Mr. Rajaei-Khorassani said, "Others have been treated hospitably and properly. They have seen those sights and those places that they wanted to see, and they left safely. This man must have done something wrong."

Mr. Rajaei-Khorassani denied that Mr. Seib, a Roman Catholic, was under suspicion because Iranian authorities thought that he was Jewish. "They knew that he was not Jewish," he said.

The Teheran daily Kayhan said Mr. Seib had tried to find "detailed information about defensive positions and tactics" of the Iranian forces while visiting the war front, but added that he should be freed if he was not a spy.

Mr. Seib's case is not expected to affect the fate of two other Americans held in Iranian prisons.

Jon Patti, a 50-year-old engineer working for a Bethesda, Md., company, was arrested in July and charged with spying for the C.I.A. Swiss officials have not been granted diplomatic access to Mr. Patti.

The other American, identified by the State Department only as a businessman, has been held for more than three years on swindling charges. He has seen a Swiss official only once.